

Issue Focus

BLACK WORKER ATTITUDES

*Political Options,
Capitalism & Investment
in South Africa*

Lawrence Schlemmer



INDICATOR PROJECT SOUTH AFRICA



Centre for Applied Social Sciences • University of Natal • Durban



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BLACK WORKER ATTITUDES:
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CAPITALISM AND INVESTMENT
IN SOUTH AFRICA

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September 1984

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	(ii)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
INTRODUCTION	1
DISINVESTMENT AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT	3
PREVIOUS RESEARCH	7
THE RESEARCH	9
THE FINDINGS	11
Life Satisfaction	11
Factors in Life Satisfaction	13
Political Consciousness	15
ATTITUDES TO CAPITALISM	20
Employers in General	20
Attitudes Around the Issue Labour Unrest	22
Trade Unions, Labour and Politics	24
WORKER IDEOLOGY	29
Capitalism or Socialism	29
Industry and Race	31
OVERSEAS INVESTMENT IN AND TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA	33
CONCLUDING DISCUSSION	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	47
APPENDIX I	48
Further Details of the Transvaal —	
Port Elizabeth Sample	

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of this study arose because such great uncertainty seems to exist regarding the way in which political factors affect the black worker in South Africa. After discussions around this topic the United States Department of State agreed to finance a project to explore the relationships between political attitudes and industrial issues among blacks in South Africa.

Grateful acknowledgement must be made to the fieldwork teams of IMS (Pty) Ltd and CASS for the conducting of high quality field-work in a short space of time.

Introduction

After somewhat of a lull in black political activity following the end of the township disturbances of 1976 onwards, political activism among blacks in South Africa is clearly evident again. Township disturbances of a generalised nature have followed recent protests and demonstrations among black, Indian and Coloured students and pupils directed at elections for the new constitutional dispensation that excludes blacks. A succession of black school boycotts have both preceded and accompanied these events. In the past few weeks a new factor emerged in the form of violence accompanying a long-expected black mineworkers strike, although this phenomenon is probably much more limited in scope and duration than the others.

The bulk of the activism appears to be concentrated among youthful groups which in the past have not succeeded in gaining active support from older blacks and workers. A call was made for a stay-at-home strike in Soweto on Monday the 17th of September, but with rather indefinite results. Adults were involved in some of the rent demonstrations earlier in the townships of the Vaal Triangle but were much less visibly involved in active street confrontations with the police.

Events like these focus attention sharply on South Africa's black workers, who naturally have much greater strategic leverage than the youth and without whom militant political strategies are not likely to have incisive effects on the system. At a time like this it is of some interest, therefore, to examine the political and strategic views of black industrial workers, which is what this analysis sets out to do. The field-work was carried out mainly in May 1984 when the political consciousness accompanying present events should already have developed.

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The study examines the attitudes of black industrial workers to a range of political and strategic issues. Very basically it poses the question of how radical, or ready for confrontation, black workers are at the present time. In doing so attention is also directed at these very important issues, in which politics, labour and economic issues are intertwined. One is the extent to which political factors have penetrated the consciousness as regards industrial relations among black workers. Another is to what extent political issues have caused black workers to question the capitalist system. A third major issue, related to the others, is whether black workers support disinvestment and boycotts as external methods of opposing apartheid.

Of all these questions the disinvestment campaign is perhaps the most complex and multi-faceted issue, and more needs to be said about this before proceeding to the analysis of the results.

Disinvestment and Constructive Engagement

Two strategic positions have emerged very clearly in the external action with regard to South Africa. One position may be termed the "disinvestment" position, which has as its basic premise that change would be achieved if the flow of external capital to South Africa could be reduced or cut off, and can include the view that trade sanctions would also be effective in undermining apartheid. Another position is that economic growth will contribute to the weakening of apartheid and particularly that external capitalists can implement reforms in their companies in South Africa and exercise other pressures which will encourage more rapid change. This is a "constructive engagement" position.

The disengagement position is informed from a number of sources and it can only be fully understood if one bears in mind that South African political refugees have been prominent in organisations, like the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which have promoted this position. After several trips abroad, conversations with various informed people in the U.S. and the U.K. and a reading of the relevant literature it would seem that the disinvestment programme (and for that matter the trade sanction movement) has emerged out of the following orientations, not all of which are held by each and every individual or group active in the disinvestment programme and which are not necessarily the same as the public arguments used:

- a revolutionary orientation, in terms of which it can be argued that disinvestment will weaken the industrial system in South Africa, thereby weakening the tax-base and the resources of the state, paving the way for armed

insurrection to overthrow a weakened system. Although it would not often be openly stated, this orientation can include the notion that disinvestment will deepen the poverty of blacks, thereby stimulating revolutionary action;

- a fundamentally anti-capitalist attitude, which easily becomes aligned with the notion that capitalism has structured the emergence of apartheid and continues to underpin it (this view is distinct from a more informed Marxist view since Marx himself argued that capitalist production had to reach an advanced stage of development before a proletariat would achieve the consciousness and resources to oppose capital);

- a milder anti-capitalist attitude which is fairly unstructured, and involves the fairly vague notion that capitalists are selfish and profiteering and that any action against the system may produce some good;

- a strategic orientation, notably that disinvestment will reduce the flow of capital and much needed technology to South Africa, and as such frighten or coerce the South African Government into making concessions;

- an empirical orientation, which arises out of various analyses which suggest that wage and opportunity differentials between the races have been maintained despite economic growth (counter-evidence to this is available and is probably ignored as propaganda);

- an attitude of political solidarity with black South African spokesmen, most of whom appear to favour disinvestment (Study Commission on U.S. Policy toward Southern Africa, 1981: 425) or with third world interests;

5.

-an attitude of diffuse hostility towards South Africa which inclines people to support anything which seems to be opposed to the whites in the country without much thought for the consequences.

Support for continued investment or at least for the continued operation of those companies already in South Africa seems to be derived from the following kinds of orientations:

- the view that capitalist interests are not synonymous with state policies and that economic growth produces needs which contradict some government policies, such as influx control, job reservation, unequal provision of education, etc;
- the view that if external companies were to continue operating in South Africa and were to deliberately implement labour reforms and social responsibility programmes then a positive effect could be exercised on the process of reform in South Africa;
- the view that rank-and-file blacks would suffer most through disinvestment and other policies aimed at weakening the South African economy;
- the view that disinvestment would not make much difference to the South African economy and that capital flows would be replaced from other sources;
- the view that disinvestment is in part a strategy aimed at violence since it proposes a weakening of the system so as to facilitate and encourage a successful insurrection in the country.

A number of these orientations make certain assumptions about the attitudes of black people in South Africa. Some viewpoints assume that black people support disinvestment or trade sanctions, and that blacks are so oppressed by capitalism that its destruction would be supported.

A variation on this is that blacks would be prepared to endure hardships if it were to be accompanied by the eventual destruction of apartheid. Another view is that South African blacks, whatever their individual situations, give support to organisations like the A.N.C. and will support the programmes that the A.N.C. espouses, like disinvestment.

A particular consideration which has emerged in recent times is that blacks, because of the continued co-existence of white rule and capitalism, have become estranged from all "ruling classes" in South Africa, and would be prepared to support anti-capitalist strategies on ideological grounds.

In the debate over capitalism, disinvestment and change in South Africa, however, rank-and-file black people are seldom if ever consulted. Nevertheless a great many people speak on their behalf. In the report of the Study Commission on U.S. Policy toward Southern Africa we read: "Finally, it is argued, black South Africans support disinvestment, and their wishes should be respected" (1981:25).

It would appear, then, that the debate about disinvestment and trade sanctions is, to say the least, very strongly informed by pre-conceived notions and orientations based on a variety of ideological positions. It is a debate which constantly runs the risk of developing a dynamic all of its own, quite independent of the desires of the mass of South Africa's peoples or of the more concrete possibilities of various types of pressures for reform being successful. (For a fuller treatment of the debate around capitalism, apartheid and change see Nolotshungu (1983), Schlemmer and Webster (1978) and Wright (1977).

This analysis is a modest attempt to introduce one element of empirical reality into the debate. It offers the carefully researched opinions of those black people in South Africa who are most directly affected by the debate; namely black South African production workers. It is a preliminary report in the sense that it presents the major trends in the data, and more detailed analysis is currently in preparation. The conclusions it draws regarding the main issues of disinvestment and trade sanctions are firm, however, and will not be altered by subsequent analysis.

Previous Research

As already indicated very little previous empirical research in this area has been conducted. A number of studies of black worker attitudes in general have been published but few have a direct bearing on the major themes of this analysis.

One study, which was in the nature of a pilot investigation, was undertaken by this author in 1979, among a representative quota sample of 150 blacks in Durban. The sample included not only production workers but a range of other occupations, since it was so constructed as to give a cross-section of black opinion. The interviews were conducted personally by trained black fieldworkers. Only one item dealing directly with disinvestment was included, as follows (item slightly shortened):

"Some people say that overseas people must stop buying South African goods and stop sending money to build factories in South Africa so as to frighten the South African government into getting rid of apartheid. Others say that they should continue because it makes jobs for all people in South Africa."

The results showed that only some 20 percent favoured disinvestment or boycotts, and fully three quarters wanted to see continued trading and investment. Males were more radical than women with 26 percent of men taking a pro-sanctions line. The most pro-boycott group were the supporters of the black consciousness movements at the time (AZAPO and AZASO) among whom 33 percent supported boycotts or disinvestment (Schlemmer, 1983).

A problem with this investigation was that it was conducted only in the Durban area. A majority of the blacks interviewed, as was only to be expected in Natal, were supporters of Chief Buthelezi and Inkatha, which for long has adopted a pro-investment and constructive engagement position. Even though the results showed a clear trend, the same trend could not be assumed to exist in the major centres of employment in which externally-owned companies operate, namely the Witwatersrand and the Eastern Cape.

Very recently a major study among black employees was published by Professor Martin Nasser of the University of South Africa School of Business Leadership (Nasser 1984). The study covered 78 companies distributed widely throughout South Africa. The themes covered by the investigation did not include disinvestment, but the results were interpreted in the media as reflecting on black support for capitalism in South Africa. Large majorities of the black respondents gave answers which suggested so strong a rejection of the capitalist system that one might easily reach the conclusion that the employees might have also supported a pro-disinvestment position. Results in the study being reported on here, however, show that such an extension of Nasser's conclusions would be unwarranted. Furthermore the fieldwork for the Nasser study appears to have been conducted by means of self-completion questionnaires, which would have favoured the better-educated, more radical employee opinion.

Up to now, therefore, no conclusive evidence has existed as to the orientations of the mass of rank-and-file black production workers regarding disinvestment and trade boycotts. The evidence which follows fills a gap in the information relevant to the ongoing debate.

The Research

In the interests of the greatest possible validity fieldwork was carried out by means of lengthy face to face interviews conducted by highly trained and experienced black interviewers in the language of choice of the respondent. In order to win the confidence of people interviewed a good deal of time was devoted to establishing sound rapport, and interviews took an average of 110 minutes each. Although contact with respondents was made in industrial areas all the interviewing took place in private, most of it in the homes of respondents. No interviews were conducted on factory premises. The interview schedule used in the fieldwork is not reproduced since items are given in the text.

Since the aim was to generalise for the people most intimately involved in the capitalist system and particularly in the sector in which most multi-national companies operate - the manufacturing sector - the sample was restricted to black male production workers. No list of people in this specific category of work is available as a sampling frame and therefore a normal random sample could not be drawn. The basis of the sampling method was the so called quota sample. In such a sample the selection of respondents is controlled by certain criteria in order to achieve representativeness. The detailed procedure was as follows.

Industrial areas in the following urban complexes were defined: Johannesburg, Pretoria, the East Rand, the West Rand, the Vaal Triangle area, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Pinetown. Contact points were selected randomly across the industrial areas. Within each selected area interviewers sought respondents who qualified as black production workers according to age criteria. In all a total of 551 interviews was conducted, distributed as follows:

10.

Johannesburg	-	146
Durban-Pinetown	-	100
Port Elizabeth	-	100
East Rand	-	68
West Rand	-	59
Pretoria	-	49
Vaal Triangle	-	29

There was deliberate over-representation of the Port Elizabeth and Durban areas so as to allow adequate assessments to be made of regional variation in attitudes. If the results had been significantly different according to area it would have been necessary to weigh the results in order to rectify for over-representation. As it turned out, however, the differences according to area were generally not significant and the results could be combined. However, the patterns are always also specified separately by area so that any patterns of difference which do exist between regions are not obscured or hidden. The age and occupational characteristics of the sample are as follows:

<u>Age</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>%</u>
16-24 yrs	- 25	Higher Semi-skilled	
25-34 yrs	- 35	and skilled	- 35
35-49 yrs	- 27	Lower Semi-skilled	
50+ yrs	- 14	and unskilled	- 65

In the report which follows the data for the subsample in the Durban-Pinetown region is provided only in summary form and is not included in presentations of combined results since the major interest as far as this report is concerned lies in the results for those areas in which most multi-national and U.S. companies are to be found, namely the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area and the Port Elizabeth area, where most of the multi-national motor companies are situated. Thus the Durban results are provided by way of comparison, and the interest as regards these results lies mainly in the fact that the Inkatha position, which is dominant in Natal, openly favours a constructive engagement strategy. Hence Durban results appear as a separate comparison and as already indicated, are not included in the category of "overall" results. (Further details of the main sample (excluding Durban) are provided in Appendix I.) Finally it must be emphasised once again that this analysis does not attempt to generalise for all black factory workers but rather for black employees in the major industrial centres in which multi-national investment is concentrated.

The Findings

A wide range of issues relating to capitalism and change in South Africa was built into the interview schedule. It was considered essential to assess the specific attitudes relating to external investment in the light of more general attitudes to work, to change, to political strategy and to private employers. The analysis commences with a review of the results concerning general life circumstances.

Life Satisfaction

Attitudes to specific concerns are frequently influenced by general life-satisfaction or grievances. In the present study a method was used to measure life satisfaction which has been frequently used by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences in the past and by Hanf *et al* in the major Arnold Bergstraesser Institute study of the prospects for change in South Africa. (Hanf *et al*, 1978, 1981). This involved showing respondents a picture of five faces with different expressions, each accompanied by a description of feelings about "life in general" which were carefully read out to respondents. The results were as follows:

	Overall * (Tvl and P.E.)	Port Elizabeth	(Durban)
Very happy	3%	2%	8%
Just happy	5	8	7
Happy yet not happy	26	21	14
Unhappy	16	17	38
Angry and impatient	50	52	33

* Tvl = Transvaal, P.E. = Port Elizabeth

Therefore, a majority of over 6 out of 10 blue-collar production workers feel either unhappy or angry about life. In the detailed cross tabulations of results certain subgroups emerged as markedly less or more unhappy than the average. These are listed below with the proportions for "unhappy" and "angry" combined:

PROPORTION UNHAPPY AND ANGRY

Overall	66%
35 to 49 Years	74
West Rand	74
Trade Union members	76
Std 1 to 4 Education	58

The absolute validity of a single item index of life satisfaction such as this can be debated, but rather more significance can be attached to standard comparisons over time, using the same interviewing team.

In a previous study among black males using exactly the same item among a sample of black male migrant contract workers conducted in 1982, the proportion indicating anger or unhappiness was 58 percent (n 480 nationwide) (Møller and Schlemmer, 1982, 1985).

Other comparative percentages drawn from the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute study and a general investigation among a sample on the Witwatersrand are the following, both once again reflecting "anger" and "unhappiness" combined: 1977 (Bergstraesser Institute study) 39%, 1981 (Centre for Applied Social Sciences study) 56% (Schlemmer, 1983).

From these comparisons it would seem that the male production workers in the present study are at least as discontent with life and probably more so than other categories of blacks in recent years on the Witwatersrand.

Another probe on general perceptions of life in the present study was as follows: *"Think of the present time in South Africa - everything that is happening. Is life for you improving, staying the same or getting worse?"*

Results are as follows:

TABLE 2 IMPROVEMENT OR DETERIORATION IN LIFE CHANCES:				
Overall result and subgroups substantially more or less positive about life chances				
		Improving	Staying the same	Getting worse
Overall	%	16	24	60
<hr/>				
Vaal Triangle	%	10	17	72
Pretoria	%	14	16	69
<hr/>				
16 to 24 Yrs	%	15	29	56
East Rand	%	20	29	50
Presently employed in U.S. Company (n55)	%	16	31	53
<hr/>				
(Durban)	%	14	25	60
<hr/>				

Here again we find an indication of majority dissatisfaction with life chances, with some variation by age and area of employment. It is interesting that those employed in U.S. companies are slightly less discontented than the group as a whole.

Factors in Life Satisfaction

Given the evidence of majority dissatisfaction in the sample, it is of interest to consider the factors producing both dissatisfaction and satisfaction with life. Our item was as follows:

"In recent years, what things have improved in the lives of people like you?"

"In recent years what things have become worse in the lives of people like you?"

The question was open-ended, with spontaneous answers elicited. Respondents were probed to answer fully and to give more than one answer, hence percentages exceed 100 in Table 3 below which presents the results.

TABLE 3 SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS AND DETERIORATION IN LIFE CHANCES),
SPONTANEOUSLY MENTIONED

IMPROVEMENTS		DETERIORATION	
	%		%
Home ownership/housing	22	Prices/GST/COL	55
Urban amenities, facilities, services	16	Political conditions/policies	50
Business opportunities	15	Wages	48
Less discrimination	12	Unemployment/Job shortage	42
Education and training	11	Housing shortage	30
More/better jobs	11	Tax/tax deductions	26
Improved standard of living/wages	8	Social pathologies	26
Welfare services	7	Rent increases	9
Transport	6	Education	9
More political rights	5	Civil unrest/sabotage	8
(Others less than 5% mention)		(Others less than 5% mention)	
No improvements	44	Nothing worse	2

As far as variations in these results according to subgroup are concerned, it is notable that the following patterns appear; only very salient and significant patterns and differences are mentioned:

	<u>Sense of Deterioration</u>	
	<u>Higher</u>	<u>Lower</u>
Prices/Cost of living	50 yrs + West Rand Vaal Triangle Std 1-4 Educ	16 - 24 yrs East Rand U.S. Co's Other Foreign Co's High School Educ
Political Circumstances	Soweto West Rand Trade Union member	Vaal Triangle Less than Std. 4
Wages	Unskilled Vaal Triangle Pretoria	Skilled Port Elizabeth U.S. Co. employees

Many of the patterns in these results are as one would expect. Some are less expected. For the first time in many years of research the author notes that political grievances are high on the agenda of ordinary production workers and this represents a change over time. It is also quite interesting that people working in U.S. and foreign-owned companies have a significantly lower sense of grievances than others.

Political Consciousness

Given the very high levels of discontent and aggrievedness projected in answers to the items in the previous section one would expect to see evidence of a militant political consciousness among the black workers in the sample. Various indexes of political consciousness were included.

The most obvious item was one on political group allegiance, phrased as follows:

"Here is a list of organisations. Which one of these organisations do people like yourself support most?/Which other one do people like you support?"

The results appear in Table 4.

TABLE 4 SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL ORGANISATION		
	Witwatersrand and Port Elizabeth	(Durban)
	1st Choice	(1st Choice)
	%	%
ANC/Nelson Mandela	27	11
United Democratic Front	11	23
AZASO	1	1
AZAPO	5	1
Inkatha/Buthelezi	14	54
Sofasonke	15	6
Other-diverse	5	4
None	22	-

There is clearly a wide contrast in leadership patterns between the Natal area and elsewhere, although all major organisations are highly relevant everywhere. The high proportion of "none" outside of Natal indicates that there is possibly a political vacuum on the Witwatersrand and Port Elizabeth for more pragmatically oriented workers which is filled by Inkatha in Natal. These results do not cover the whole country and therefore one cannot say which organisation is most popular in the RSA on the basis of this survey.

Coming closer to a definition of the extent of political militancy in the sample, one item used was indirect inasmuch as it relates to Namibia, hence offering respondents an opportunity of voicing action preferences within the relative safety of a displaced context as it were:

"You have heard of Namibia a country with many more black people than white people. Whites still rule the country under the protection of the South African Government. What do you think black people should do in Namibia at the present time?"

Spontaneous answers were classified for the analysis, which appears in Table 5.

TABLE 5 BLACK ACTION SUGGESTED FOR NAMIBIA - OVERALL RESULTS AND SUBSTANTIAL VARIATIONS BETWEEN GROUPS IN REGARD TO ARMED INSURRECTION

(Percentages across: sum to more than 100% since more than one answer could be given)

		Inactivity Passivity	Peaceful Protest/ Negotiation Organisation	Labour, Commercial Action	Armed Confronta- tion
Overall Tvl/P.E. (Durban)	%	36 66	67 65	25 20	56 52
UPWARD VARIATION					
16 to 24 Yrs	%				66
Higher Socio Econ Status	%				68
High School	%			31	65
Pretoria	%			43	62
Soweto	%			32	66

These results suggest that thoughts of armed confrontation are almost as prominent in the minds of the respondents as peaceful attempts at encouraging change. It is particularly the youth and better educated people, and people living in Soweto and Pretoria who are more militantly inclined. Curiously, results not presented in the table above show that those respondents working for U.S. companies in South Africa are significantly less militantly inclined than the sample in general.

An item also aimed at testing general militancy and willingness to take political risks was as follows:

"It is best for black people to be careful in politics and not get into trouble and lose what they have." Those who disagreed with the item were taken as displaying a militant consciousness.

The proportions who disagreed are listed below, in the form of the overall sample as well as subgroups displaying a substantially greater or lesser degree of political risk orientation:

INDICATION OF WILLINGNESS TO TAKE POLITICAL RISKS

Overall Tv1./P.E.	61%
(Buthelezi Commission research 1982. Equivalent Group, - Tv1)	(45)
Durban	31
-----	-----
Soweto	68
Pretoria	71
Trade Union Member	72
Middle Education - Std. 5/6	67
-----	-----
50 Yrs +	51
East Rand	50
Stds. 1-4	50

The comparison above with the sample from the Buthelezi Commission research in 1982 is particularly interesting because it suggests a growth of militancy between samples in time which were interviewed in exactly the same way and in a similar context. Generally the current results show high levels of militant consciousness particularly concentrated in Pretoria, Soweto and among black trade unionists. The more middle-class people who appeared most radical in the previous item drop away in the responses to the item above, perhaps suggesting that their militancy may not be as deep-seated as many think.

Finally in this range of issues the question was posed: *"If the ANC were to come in secretly asking people to help it, which of the following would happen in your area? - most would help it / not most but a large number / only a few."* The proportions indicating that "most" would help it are presented below, on the assumption that it is a projection of private political feelings:

PERCEPTION THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD HELP ANC

Overall Tv1./P.E.	42%
Durban	19*
(Durban sample 1981,n106)	(25)*
Pretoria	61
Trade Union Members	54
Std. 5/6	47

* Difference not significant.

The pattern of responses suggest that there is very substantial political militancy lurking in the black worker groups and the between-group variations are very similar to those reflected in response to the previous item.

Generally the different patterns of variation which appear between the "Namibia" projection and the last two items of more immediate relevance to the local situation suggest that the better-educated people may like to sound more militant in regard to issues at a distance but that it is a group of middle education, involved in the trade union movement and particularly in Pretoria perhaps which has the most telling and consistent profile of attitudinal militancy. Even this, however, does not allow one to assume that they would behave in the way their attitudes incline them.

The results suggest that the Durban workers are inclined to be more pragmatic and perhaps more restrained in their attitudes than the workers elsewhere. This pattern has been evident for some time in previous research and it may be due in large measure to the different style of leadership adopted by Inkatha in the region.

Attitudes to Capitalism

Employers in General

Having established in the previous section that the cross section of black production workers dealt with in this report has a very radical orientation in a general political sense, linked with pervasive and serious discontentment over life chances, one would expect to find attitudes quite sharply critical of the typical employment situation of black workers. This is indeed the case.

The following composite item was presented:

"Here are a number of things which black people have been heard to say about factories ... (etc). Tell me which you agree with and which you disagree with?" What followed was a balanced series of statements specified in the results presented in Table 6.

This composite index of attitudes to typical workplaces reveals that the image of employers is dominantly negative, quantified in the general "index of criticism" in Table 6 as 71 percent overall, based on seven positive and six negative descriptions of typical employers of blacks. It is noteworthy that the most critical are trade union members and workers who conceive of using labour power for political protest. The more highly skilled workers are less critical as one would expect. Those who work in U.S. companies are least critical (but not very substantially less critical), in part but not only because they tend to be better-educated (51% of the 55 people employed in U.S. companies had high school education versus 36% in S.A. companies). The results, however, cannot be taken to be a reflection of U.S. companies because the question specified employers in general. Their answers were probably in part affected by their present employment, however.

* Durban results are not included in this section.

TABLE 6 IMAGE PROFILE OF TYPICAL EMPLOYERS AS ENDORSED BY
BLACK PRODUCTION WORKERS

	<u>Percentage Agreement</u>				
	Overall	T.U.	U.S. Co.	Labour Radicals*	Higher Skills**
	%	%	%	%	%
They often try to help blacks by appealing to government	27	22	36	23	29
They help blacks by providing work	57	60	66	55	61
They pay as much to blacks as they can without losing profits	53	60	73	46	57
They only dismiss blacks for serious faults after a fair investigation	33	24	27	31	37
They try to help blacks with housing, education and loans	29	32	55	24	34
They try to appoint helpful and sympathetic supervisors over blacks	26	21	36	23	27
They train blacks in the factories for better jobs and promotion	43	48	58	41	44
They allow their supervisors to treat blacks badly	59	63	51	58	53
They get as much work from blacks for as little pay as possible	93	98	96	94	93
They do not allow blacks to make progress or show ability in work	73	76	67	75	72
They favour Indians or coloureds over black people	96	98	96	97	95
They work with and support the government	91	95	100	90	95
They dismiss black workers without giving them a chance to state their case	77	81	71	78	73
Index of Criticism: Average of % agreement on negative items and % agreement - 100 on positive items	71	73	64	73	69

* Labour radicals - people willing to use labour power for political ends
** Higher skilled = High school education.

More generally, the results show that private employers are very definitely seen to be part of a white establishment which includes the government. What is valued most is job opportunity, pay and training but employers are seen very negatively on other issues.

Attitudes Around the Issue Labour Unrest

In the light of the highly negative attitudes to employers revealed in the last section it is necessary to explore the structuring of workers thinking around the issue of labour unrest. One of the items read: *"Which of the following things will cause black workers to strike or create disturbances in future years?"* A list of structured alternatives was presented to respondents. Before this item in the interview, an open ended question requiring spontaneous answers was also asked: *"In 1973 there were big strikes where many thousands of black workers went on strike together. What could cause this to happen again?"* The results of both types of probe are given in table 7.

The finding reflected in the two columns in Table 7 are not directly comparable with each other since they were obtained by different techniques and one relates to a mass strike while the other refers to a normal strike. However, an interpretation of the patterns allows one to assess the relative salience of different worker concerns around the topic of labour unrest.

As one would expect, wages, as the primary reason for working, have the highest salience in both contexts. The quality of supervision and communication follows wages in importance, with unfair dismissals close behind as a specific issue. Race discrimination in industry is another important issue. Obviously, other work-related grievances, including pay deductions, are also highly salient.

TABLE 7 FACTORS CONSIDERED TO BE LIKELY TO LEAD TO STRIKES OR MASS STRIKES		
Factors identified	Spontaneous answers re Mass strike	Normal strike: Endorsement of structured alternatives
	%	%
Wage Grievances	91	95
Unfair dismissals	18	94
Supervision	27	94
Race discrimination	11	91
Pass Laws/Influx Control	10	75
Pension deductions	1	50
Tax	4	61
Other grievances/deductions	30	71
Political strike	10	61
Rents/housing shortage	8	66
Worker - management communication	37	Not included
Transport	7	" "
Prices, Inflation, C.O.L.	10	" "
To support Union call for strikes	3	" "
To support other workers on strike	2	" "
Other		" "

The findings reflected in the two columns in Table 7 are not directly comparable with each other since they were obtained by different techniques and one relates to a mass strike while the other to a normal strike. However, an interpretation of the patterns allows one to assess the relative salience of different worker concerns around the topic of labour unrest.

As one would expect, wages, as the primary reason for working, have the highest salience in both contexts. The quality of supervision and communication follows wages in importance, with unfair dismissals close behind as a specific issue. Race discrimination in industry is another important issue. Obviously, other work-related grievances, including pay deductions, are also highly salient.

It is the author's contention that despite a great deal of progress by management in understanding labour relations and the black-white interface, the salience of supervision, communication and race discrimination in industry are still hopelessly under-rated as factors inclining black workers towards strike-proneness.

The results in the table are also interesting in that they reflect a somewhat lower salience of political issues, trade union solidarity and community issues in the context of strikes and worker action. Trade union and worker solidarity issues are particularly low in the consciousness of black workers in South Africa at the present time (although they are perhaps unlikely to remain so).

With regard to the issue of supervision, one of the tendencies currently is for employers to replace white supervisors with the next groups in the traditional South African racial hierarchy - coloureds or Indians. The respondents were given the following statement *"Black workers are happy to work under coloured and Indian supervisors - do you agree or disagree?"* No fewer than 92 percent disagreed with the statement, and this pattern was consistent across all categories of workers. This bears out the fact that generally not sufficient thought and planning is being given to the issue of Africanisation of supervisory positions.

Trade Unions, Labour and Politics

We have noted in the previous section that the black workers in the sample tend to separate political issues from the issue of strikes and labour disturbances. The topic of politics in labour and trade union activity was also approached more directly. One item was in the form of a conversation between two people. *"One man Joseph says : Black people have many political problems but they must not let these problems disturb their work in the factories. Another man Paul says : We will never solve our political problems until we start*

*using our power as workers to demonstrate against the problems.
Which man would you agree with?"*

No less than 72 percent of the workers supported the position that political problems could only be solved by worker action. This proposition rises to 79 percent among trade union members and 81 percent among those with middle levels of education (Std. 5/6) who were identified earlier as the most seriously radical workers. The proportion drops to 64 per cent among those employed in U.S Companies.

This item reveals a strong concept of the potential of worker power in the political field, but it does not tell us whether or not the respondents would actually wish to see labour "disrupted" as a political weapon. We therefore have to consider other items as well.

One probe concerned the role of trade Unions: *"What can trade unions do for black people in South Africa?"* Table 8 gives the patterns of spontaneous responses.

TABLE 8 PERCEIVED ROLES OF TRADE UNIONS FOR BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA	
Role of Unions	%
Improve wages	54
Protect against dismissals/disciplinary action	26
Improve management worker communication	21
Foster black job advancement	18
Improve other working conditions (diverse)	18
Improve race relations and work	13
Fight unemployment	13
Improve housing/transport/community facilities	9
Improve supervision	6
Fight influx control	3
Work for political rights	3
Other mention	1

We note from these replies that political issues and community concerns outside the workplace are given relatively low ranks in the assessments of what trade unions can do. Members of trade unions give the same patterns of replies. It is interesting that even those people who in response to the previous probe endorsed the view that worker action could bring political changes did not envisage a political role for trade unions. It seems quite clear that unions are perceived and appreciated within an industrial and not a political context, even by workers who are political radicals.

A more general view of the salience of trade unions is obtained from an item : *"Which will be most valuable for an African like you?"* - a series of "resources" was read out and respondents were asked to select one as most important, as appears in table 9.

TABLE 9 RESOURCES OF GREATEST VALUE TO BLACKS	
	%
Skills training for job advancement	43
The Franchise	19
A better education	16
Strong black leadership	10
Strong trade union	9
Strong political organisation	3

The results show how low in the list of general resources of value trade unions are. Even trade union members give trade unions a low ranking (12%) as to those workers who believe that labour action can bring political gains(8%).

Hence it seems quite clear that trade unions are conceived as having an industrial and not a political role. This still leaves us with the question of whether or not black workers would be prepared to use labour power in a political context if they were mobilised by some other agency. Two items are relevant

here. Both items give the context of a *"respected leader of black people wishing to show the strength of black people to the government ..."* and asking black workers to

- a) *"...stay away from work for two weeks"* and
- b) *"... not to buy from certain shops or certain goods..."*

The responses appear in Table 10.

TABLE 10 WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT POLITICAL DEMONSTRATION STRIKES OR TRADE BOYCOTTS		
		%
Political Strikes:	Willingness to support 2 weeks strike	36
	Willingness to support shorter strike	19
	Unwilling	45
Trade Boycotts:	Support for trade boycott	32
	Support for a few days	22
	Unwilling	41

These items give a more suggestive view of the likelihood of politically inspired worker action. In both the political strike and the trade boycott, attitudes of full commitment seem to be present among just over one-third of the workers sampled.

The proportions fully oriented to a political strike are slightly higher among the trade union members and worker-radicals referred to earlier but the proportions are still short of 50 percent. Otherwise there is remarkable evenness in the results across groups, with only the more affluent workers and workers in the Vaal Triangle showing a greater willingness to support the actions proposed. The same applies to the issue of a trade boycott.

In general then, one may sum up by saying that despite high levels of political discontent and a very poor image of the typical industrial employer group, the workers interviewed separate their labour and political agendas to a remarkable degree. Trade unions are not seen as political instruments, and while there is a cognitive awareness of the political potential in labour action, no more than just over one-third of workers seem to have attitudes which would imply a full commitment to the use of labour action in a political context.

Worker Ideology

The previous sections have shown that despite massive frustrations and discontent, the rank-and-file black factory worker is not orientated towards the destruction of capitalism using his labour power. The economic ideologies of the respondents are explained in more detail in the following section.

Capitalism or Socialism

The findings of Nasser (1984) as well as results already discussed in this report show clearly that one cannot expect the average black factory worker to evaluate the capitalist system in South Africa without being influenced by the broader racial issues in the country. Capitalists in South Africa, particularly the larger ones, are virtually all white and factory workers are dominantly black. Therefore one would never know to what extent the evaluation concerned capitalism as such or to what extent it reflects a rejection of the racial system which capitalism, avoidably or unavoidably, has accommodated.

This distorting factor cannot be completely eliminated, but in an attempt to obtain replies in which the effects of the South African racial structure are at least minimised, the issue of capitalism versus socialism was explored in a non-South African context: *"Think of a country ruled by blacks like Zambia or Kenya. What is best in such a country?"* Alternatives were then read out carefully to respondents, and the results appear in Table 11 below.

TABLE 11				
PREFERRED FORM OF ECONOMIC ORGANISATION IN A BLACK RULED COUNTRY				
	Overall - Tvl and P.E.	US Co. employees	TU members	High School education
	%	%	%	%
Factories and shops owned by black government	18	16	13	15
Factories and shops owned by black businessmen	23	7	17	19
Factories and shops owned by anyone who can be successful in business, not only black people	60	78	71	66

In addition to the data reported in Table 11, the following listing gives a comparative overview of the proportions in different subgroups of the sample supporting the free enterprise system.

Proportions in subsamples endorsing the view that factories and shops should be owned privately by any successful individual

	%
Overall	60
-----	-----
25 - 34 yrs of age	64
West Rand	73
Port Elizabeth	70
Employed in US Co.	78
Employed in other overseas Co.	67
Previously employed in US Co	81
High School Education	66
TU member	71
-----	-----
16 to 24 yrs	54
East Rand	54
Vaal Triangle	24
Pretoria	41
S.A. Company	55
Unskilled	44

These results show some remarkable variations, namely that trade union members are more accepting of the free enterprise system than average, that the more politicised and more "radical" workers with high school education are also committed to free enterprise and that those workers with experience of working in multi-national corporations, particularly US companies, are very substantially more likely to be in favour of the private capitalist system.

The groups which are least likely to support capitalism are those who work in areas or companies in which racial discrimination is most severe, such as in Pretoria or the Vaal Triangle area, and among those who are least skilled, and who therefore see fewest benefits from the system. The younger employees (16 to 24) are also marginally less favourably inclined to free enterprise. An inspection of intercorrelations not presented shows that this is not due to any accompanying factors like low skill levels, etc. It seems that there is a tendency for the school-leaver or the newer employee to be less favourably disposed to the system.

More generally, however, the results seem to suggest quite clearly that the free enterprise system is dominantly the preferred alternative. This is despite the very persuasive option of businesses owned by a black government, and the possibly equally attractive alternative of businesses being limited to black ownership. The results appear to be compelling, and any notion that they may be due to fear or caution is dispelled by earlier findings which showed that workers feel completely free to disclose their support for banned organisations like the ANC.

Industry and Race

The workers may be accommodating of capitalism but they are by no means inclined to accept the racial capitalism which is still characteristic of much of South African industry. The data on the image of South African employers presented earlier in this report bear witness to this. Even clearer evidence comes from two items included in the questionnaire on racial equality-inequality in industry, the results of which appear in Table 12.

TABLE 12

ATTITUDES TO RACIAL EQUALITY IN INDUSTRY VERSUS ABSOLUTE GAINS

	Overall - TVL and P.E. %
<i>"What would people like you prefer?"</i>	
'All races growing more prosperous quite slowly but with whites and blacks becoming more equal"	92
"All races growing more prosperous quickly but with whites staying as far ahead of blacks as at present"	8
<i>"What would you prefer?"</i>	
"Blacks and whites getting the same salaries for the same jobs but everyone getting very small increases"	90
"Black and white salaries staying unequal for some years but everyone being given quite large regular increases"	9

These results are so overwhelmingly in favour of equality, despite the "trade off" of lower absolute gains built into the items, that there can be no doubt that a very definite consciousness about racial equality exists among black workers. (See also Buthelezi Commission, 1982, in which similar questions were asked.) There was such unanimity regarding these issues in the sample that no significant differences between subgroups in the sample exist.

This does not necessarily mean that the expectations are that the respondents expect the hierarchy as it exists at the moment to be overturned immediately. The desire, rather, is for equality of opportunity and treatment. Some idea of the balance in the views of the respondents can be obtained from the results to an item which read as follows: *"Whites are strict but they are honest and fair — blacks would not be happier under their own people."* The percentage agreement with the statement was as follows:

Acceptance of whites in authority

	<u>%</u>
Overall	45
<hr/>	
50 years and older	54
<hr/>	
Vaal Triangle	35
Pretoria	29
Unskilled	38
Trade union members	41

The pattern of results shows that it is among the workers in the areas of greatest traditionalism in race relations that whites in authority are least accepted — Pretoria and the Vaal Triangle. Unskilled workers, who have the greatest difficulty in communicating with whites are also less inclined to accept whites in authority. In 1981 the percentage agreement to an identical question among black workers in the research for the Buthelezi Commission (Witwatersrand sample, N 228) was 35 percent, a full 10 percent below the current finding. Therefore it would seem that no trend towards an increasing rejection of white authority exists.

Overseas Investment in and Trade with South Africa

This topic is the focal point of the study. Up to now we have seen results pointing to a very poor image of industrial management held by black workers in South Africa but also to an acceptance of capitalism and to a general rejection of the use of organised labour in the political struggle, despite high levels of politicisation and serious political grievances. There is, thus, a mixture of frustration and pragmatism in the consciousness of black workers which does not contain any clear indications of what their attitudes to disinvestment and trade boycotts might be.

Disinvestment and trade boycotts of South Africa are complex issues which are not likely to form part of popular debate among black workers. Therefore these issues had to be approached with great care in the interviews. Fairly detailed explanations of the issues in clear and simple language were given before questions were posed. The same themes were also addressed in several different questions in order to make the results as valid as possible. The results are given in the sequence of Tables which follow (Tables 13 to 17). Each Table includes the exact phrasing of the explanation and the questions asked. In each question alternative answers were rotated in presentation in order to eliminate recall bias.

TABLE 13 PERCEPTIONS OF THE INTERESTS PROMOTED BY FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Item *"Which one of the following is true. When American companies build factories in South Africa, who do they help most?"*

	Overall Sample	Employed in US Company
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Help the African people to progress	38	26
Help the whites	16	31
Help the South African Government	46	44
	n = 451	n = 55

These results give an inconclusive result. While in the sample as a whole over one-third see blacks as the main beneficiaries of US investment, this, oddly enough, drops to just over 25 percent among those employed in US companies. It is probable, however, that even though most respondents saw whites or the government as the main beneficiaries, they did not necessarily see blacks as not gaining at all from external investment. This is clarified in Table 14 below.

TABLE 14 SUPPORT FOR CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT VERSUS DISINVESTMENT AND TRADE BOYCOTTS		
<p>Item <i>"One man, Samuel says: "Overseas people and banks and companies must stop buying South African goods and stop sending money to build factories in South Africa so as to frighten the South African government into getting rid of Apartheid."</i></p> <p><i>"Another man Joseph says: "People and banks and companies overseas should continue to buy South African goods and send money to build factories because it makes jobs for all people in South Africa."</i></p> <p><i>Which man would you agree with, Samuel or Joseph?</i></p>		
	Overall Sample	Employed in US Company
	%	%
Support for Samuel (Disinvestment/Boycott)	25	29
Support for Joseph (Constructive Engagement)	75	71

Although very slightly more employees in US companies support the disengagement position than among black workers in general, very clear majorities of employees in both the overall sample and the subsample support engagement. Variations in the degree of support for disinvestment are listed below.

Support for Disinvestment/Trade sanctions

	<u>%</u>
Overall	25
-----	-----
16 - 24 yrs	33
Worker radicals (support for use of labour in political action)	29
-----	-----
35 yrs and older	20
Under Std. 4 education	20

There is thus very little variation in the results. Trade union members, for example, are no more likely to support disinvestment than other workers. The higher support for disinvestment among employees in US companies is in large measure due to the fact that these companies have a higher proportion of 16 - 24 year old people in service (33% US Co's, 24% overall) and also have fewer people with lower educational qualifications.

It should be noted that the item reported on in Table 14 has a built-in incentive to support the disinvestment position, namely the phrase "*....frighten the South African government into getting rid of Apartheid....*" Given this deliberate suggestion in the question, it is remarkable that only one-quarter of the respondents support disinvestment.

At another point in the interview the same theme was explored, as indicated in Table 15.

The results overall are remarkably similar to those in Table 14. It is the workers from Pretoria, the nerve centre of apartheid, who are most inclined to support disinvestment. The reasons for such support make it clear that even among the disinvestment group, one important position taken is aimed at improving wages and conditions rather than being aimed at a complete ending to foreign investment. The reasons in favour of disinvestment also emphasise political factors rather than intentions to harm management, while the reasons against it feature fears of loss of employment and the consequent harm to blacks as the most prominent factors.

TABLE 15

SUPPORT FOR OR OPPOSITION TO EXTERNAL INVESTMENT

"There are groups of people in America and England who try to encourage banks and organisations not to invest money in South Africa - not to put their money in factories which are in South Africa. Do you think this is a good or a bad thing?"

	Overall Sample	Employees in US Companies
	%	%
Good thing (Disinvestment)	26	24
Bad thing (Engagement)	74	76
<i>"Why do you feel this way?"</i>		
Good (Spontaneous)	(Base 100%*)	(Base 100%*)
Warn South African Government/ Frighten South African Government	30	62
Weaken Government/whites	18	23
Weaken managers/employers/capitalists	9	15
Encourage better wages/conditions	39	54
Encourage political rights for blacks	28	46
Other	4	-
<i>"Why do you feel this way?"</i>		
Bad (Spontaneous)	(Base 100%*)	(Base 100%*)
Fewer jobs	54	50
South Africa becomes poorer	19	26
Harms blacks	41	48
Makes no difference/no effect	5	5
Harms South Africa/Government	12	19
Other	2	-

* Answers exceed 100% because more than one answer was given

Variations in support for disinvestment as measured in the results in Table 15 show the following pattern.

Support for Disinvestment

	<u>%</u>
Overall	26
Pretoria	35
Employees at non- US multinationals	19
50+ years	16
East Rand	15

A very similar question was asked but one relating to trade sanctions rather than disinvestment (see Q.20 in the interview schedule). The results obtained are so similar to those given in Table 15 that it is unnecessary to repeat the full table. Some 26 percent supported trade sanctions against South Africa (24 percent among employees in US companies) while 74 percent felt that trade sanctions were bad. Once again the effects of sanctions on employment opportunity and therefore on black welfare were prominent among the reasons given.

Finally, among the range of questions on disinvestment, a third type of question was posed, the details of which plus the results appear in Table 16.

TABLE 16 SUPPORT FOR DISINVESTMENT, CONTINUED INVESTMENT OR
CODES OF CONDUCT FOR COMPANIES

"Which of the following would you prefer to see happen — What is best?"

(The alternatives were read twice, reversing order on second reading.)

	<u>Overall sample</u>	<u>Employees in US Companies</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
"American companies should build as many factories in South Africa as they can, making as many jobs for blacks as they can."	59	60
"American companies should only run factories in South Africa if they can pay blacks high wages, give good pensions and help with housing, even if they make fewer jobs."	32	33
"American companies should not run factories in South Africa because they make the government of South Africa stronger."	9	7

Among trade union members the support for complete withdrawal rises very slightly to 13 percent, among people in Soweto it is 14 percent and in Port Elizabeth it is 12 percent. Other variations between sub-samples are even less significant. Thus here again there is consensus in the sample.

These results are noteworthy. Even when the option of codes of conduct including higher wages and other benefits is built into the probe, as is the case in Table 16, the majority of respondents still hold firmly to an opposition to anything which might remove US investment from South Africa. Furthermore, when the option of codes of conduct is presented to respondents, the proportion in favour of disinvestment drops from the 24 - 25 percent recorded in Tables 14 and 15 to a mere 9 to 12 percent. Hence one must conclude that the promotion of total disinvestment by US companies operating in South Africa has virtually no support among black workers in the very representative areas surveyed.

The reasons given in Table 15 indicate some of the major factors inclining workers to support continued investment. There are other factors as well, one of which is the image of US companies in South Africa. Results on this are given in Table 17.

The results in Table 17 are remarkably favourable for US companies as far as employment image is concerned. The slightly but consistently less flattering image held by the actual employees of US companies shows that the image outstrips the performance to some extent. Even among the US company employees, however, the employment image is consistently much more favourable than unfavourable.

Given the outstanding reputation that US companies appear to enjoy among black production workers it is not surprising that so little support for disinvestment exists. The fact that the employees in the US companies themselves share almost as favourable an image would strongly suggest that the codes of employment practice (the Sullivan Code) has had a very salutary effect on personnel policies in these companies.

TABLE 17

IMAGE OF THE EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE OF US COMPANIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

"There are a number of American companies in South Africa. How do you think these companies compare with South African companies? Even if you do not know for sure, please tell us what you have heard or what you think is true."

		More		Same	Less*
<u>Wages</u>	%	A11	74	17	6
"Do American companies pay blacks more, the same or less as South African companies?"	%	US Co. empl.	67	27	6
<u>Help with housing and education</u>	%	A11	71	18	6
"Do American companies help blacks with housing and education more, the same or less than South African companies?"	%	US Co	58	29	13
<u>Training of blacks</u>	%	A11	75	16	7
"Do American companies train blacks for better jobs more, the same or less than South African companies?"	%	US Co	67	22	11
<u>Dealing with black unions</u>	%	A11	60	24	7
"Are American companies willing to negotiate and deal with black trade unions more, the same or less than South African companies?"	%	US Co	46	31	16
			Better	Same	Worse
<u>Supervision</u>	%	A11	65	24	4
"Do American companies have better, the same, or worse supervision, that is, supervisors and foremen, than South African companies?"	%	US Co	58	33	7
<u>Disciplinary practices</u>	%	A11	70	20	5
"Are American companies more fair, the same, or less fair in discipline than South African companies?"	%	US Co	51	35	11

* Balance making up 100% consisted of 'Don't Know'.

Results from the Durban sample (n100) not presented thusfar tend to confirm the broad pattern of reactions to disinvestment which has been noted. The interviewing in Durban was conducted by a separate team of interviewers working under different supervision, yet the results obtained are virtually identical. The following are comparisons of percentage support for the disinvestment positions between the Transvaal/Port Elizabeth and the Durban samples on the items in tables 14, 15 and 16 respectively: 25% vs 28%, 26% vs 28% and 9% vs 7%. The Durban respondents, however, gave less favourable evaluations of US company employment performance. The average endorsement of the view that US companies are better than South African companies on all the issues listed in Table 17 for the Durban sample was 60 percent versus 69 percent for the Transvaal/Port Elizabeth sample. The 60 percent average for the Durban sample nevertheless shows that even in an area in which very few US companies operate they are viewed in a more favourable light than South African companies.

Generally speaking, then, the results accumulate to show a very substantial majority opposition to disinvestment policy. It might be argued that too great an incentive was given to support the disinvestment position by mentioning the effect on job creation in the wording of the items. This incentive, however, was matched by the opposite incentive which was worded as "frightening the South African Government into getting rid of Apartheid".

Generally speaking black people have great faith — often unrealistic faith — in the capacity of the Western powers to influence the South African government. There is no reason why the wording of the disinvestment position should have been any less attractive than the wording of the pro-investment alternatives.

It might also be argued that these responses cannot be generalised for the black population as a whole. Some observers would expect a better educated and more sophisticated population

like that of Soweto, for example, to support a pro-disinvestment position.

Results from the sample in this study itself, however, would contradict this view. The following is a comparison between the percentage support for disinvestment in the Transvaal/Port Elizabeth sample as a whole and in the Soweto and the high-school subsamples, across the items presented in tables 14, 15 and 16:

	Overall (n451)	Soweto (n146)	High School Education (n175)
	%	%	%
Table 14	25	26	31
" 15	26	26	26
" 16	9	14	11

From this comparison it would appear to be highly unlikely that a Soweto sample would give majority endorsement to a disinvestment position. A white collar and student sample in Soweto might produce a substantially higher proportion favouring disinvestment but then this would have to be interpreted as a black middle class viewpoint. Given the very small size of the black middle class in South Africa it could never be taken as representative of rank-and-file blacks in any part of the country.

Concluding Discussion

The results of this study form an interesting pattern. There seems little doubt that black industrial workers are responding to the present socio-political climate. Generally the effects of the economic recession are also clearly evident in their attitudes.

There is evidence of sharp discontentment among clear majorities of black workers. There is also a clear majority awareness of political policy as it affects blacks and a dominant rejection of the present policy dispensation. Added to this there is a militant sentiment evident in well over half of the black workers surveyed.

This militant sentiment among the better educated workers could be largely rhetorical, reflecting the fact that they have absorbed the mood of the black media and the black intelligentsia in the townships. There is, however, also strong evidence that categories of workers who were probably formerly less politicised are reacting with anger to conditions and constraints.

This is evident in the attitudes of even less well-educated workers in places like Pretoria and the Vaal Triangle, where race relations tend to be worse than in, say, Johannesburg. In other words, the militancy of sentiment expressed in these results is not by any means only due to any fashionable radical political culture in places like Soweto. These results give evidence of very serious grass-roots anger in places not usually expected to be at the forefront of black political thinking.

Despite these clear trends, however, the major pattern is for black workers to separate political issues from the industrial sphere. Notwithstanding a very poor image of employers and management in general, the workers do not allow their political feelings to colour workplace strategies. Hence a minority of

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of workers emerge as being sufficiently militant to infuse labour issues with wider political objectives. It should be borne in mind, however, that the minority is substantial; roughly one-third of workers seem to have the sentiments which would incline them to use labour power to gain political objectives.

Most black workers, therefore, have a split consciousness at the present time, with a minority, albeit substantial, having a consistent militancy which covers both labour, community and political issues. The majority appear to value the benefits of wage employment sufficiently not to wish to see their work opportunities destabilised by political action.

This is valid for the present, but the minority whose political and labour attitudes are consistently militant could grow over time if political discontents increase or become more intense.

This pattern of consciousness is compatible with the finding that black workers do not reject capitalism as a system, even though they are very emphatic in wishing to see it improved so as to produce equality of opportunity. The black workers may be very angry but they have not yet become ideologically estranged from the present industrial system.

The results of the present study in many ways support those of Nasser (1984) in showing that a great deal of resentment and mistrust of management exists. Nevertheless they still appear to perceive prospects of the employment system of industrial South Africa being improved to eliminate the discrimination they appear to experience. It is noteworthy, however, that in some areas, like the Vaal Triangle and Pretoria, the results show (tentatively because of small subsample size) that resentments are so great that majorities reject the capitalist system in these areas. This is a clear indication of the danger inherent in not eliminating race discrimination in industry.

Given the broad pattern of findings, however, it is perhaps not surprising that black production workers in South Africa are not likely at this stage to support the programmes abroad to promote withdrawal of Western or more specifically United States capital from the South African economy. The conclusions are based on a variety of probes in the survey, some of which included a rationale for disinvestment which would be politically persuasive for black people. The pattern of replies, however, remained consistent, showing a large and firm majority in favour of continued and increased US investment in South Africa.

These findings are very consistent with other results, which show that those blacks employed in US companies are likely to have a slightly more favourable view of employers than other workers. There can be little doubt from this trend, as well as from the very favourable employment image which US companies enjoy, that for black workers the presence of US capital in South Africa is highly valued.

Quite obviously the motivations of the black production workers are very pragmatic. They perceive the issue of external investment and trade policy with regard to South Africa in bread and butter terms. They take an unabashedly short-run and material view of the issue. Nevertheless, they are the people on whose behalf the disinvestment campaign is waged abroad, and for that reason their preferences should be heeded by protagonists in the campaign.

There is perhaps another reason why the preference of these black production workers should count in the debate. Their replies on political issues show clearly that they are no dull, apathetic and crushed proletariat who must be saved from a morass of false consciousness by liberated minds abroad. These production workers have very firm political views and very substantial proportions are inclined to express support for the very agencies who are pursuing the objectives of disengagement abroad. If ever these agencies achieve formal influence in South African policy and affairs black production workers of the kind sampled for this study will be among the first supporters of that leadership.

In the meantime, however, these production workers have to weigh their political commitments against their responsibilities. While very aggrieved and fairly radical in regard to their political circumstances they realise that the system of industrial production, for all its weaknesses which they are the first to recognise, spells survival for the black proletariat.

This awareness may be heightened at a time of recession and high unemployment like the present, but comparative results over time which have been quoted show that the attitudes of these workers are not ephemeral but have a consistent pattern. They wish to see the benefits of the industrial system protected, no matter what the other aspects of political change might be. They are prepared to express support for banned organisations and over a third of them are even prepared to say that they will participate in a mass political strike, but they want their employment and material opportunities protected. Disinvestment by US companies and trade sanctions are a threat to their material and work interests, and therefore they oppose them with firm consistency.

In short, black workers make a balanced, strategic assessment of their position and of potential gains and losses. It involves a necessary (for them) distinction between political and survival strategy which extends to a very careful distinction between alternative roles for trade unions. They appear not to see it as functional for unions and labour organisation to become involved in a political campaign. The extent to which they achieve a notion of specific domains of activity is remarkable, and it contradicts many a thesis that black workers are non-modern men who cannot separate specific principles from diffuse and general grievances.

Some people may argue that it is precisely this tendency among South African blacks to give priority to short-term survival and security that has crippled the black liberation struggle. This is the kind of prescriptive stance that can only be taken by well-educated middle class activists, however, for whom survival and security is not an issue. Change in South Africa is not primarily to be sought for the benefit of the disaffected middle class activists, and therefore any "liberation" must occur with the

support and involvement of the black working classes unless it is to be yet something else which is imposed on black people. It is perhaps appropriate, then, for programmes of change in South Africa to work within the priorities and possibilities of the black working classes. In this sense the disinvestment strategy, whatever its validity as a means of providing opposition to vested white interests and structures, cannot claim to be a campaign on behalf of the black rank-and-file people of South Africa.

Perhaps the major implication of this study is that most black workers in South Africa at this stage keep the spheres of politics and labour action separate. This should not comfort employers and the authorities unduly, however. A majority of these black workers appear to realise that their labour power could be a powerful political weapon should they wish to use it. Furthermore, a substantial minority has sufficiently militant sentiments to have bridged the separation between the political and occupational spheres. Unless policy reforms occur to alleviate the frustrations and grievances of black workers in their daily lives more and more of them will draw their political views into the sphere of labour. Given the increasing militancy which this study has demonstrated, reform in urban policy, community development and influx control laws has become a critical necessity.

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Appendix I
Further Details of the Transvaal —
Port Elizabeth Sample

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